

ROTUNDA

the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

**ELEGANCE
FROM THE
BOUDOIR**

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CONSCIOUS?**

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ELIZABETHAN
HERITAGE**

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the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

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7

FOOD AND CULTURE

Cooking with Jazz

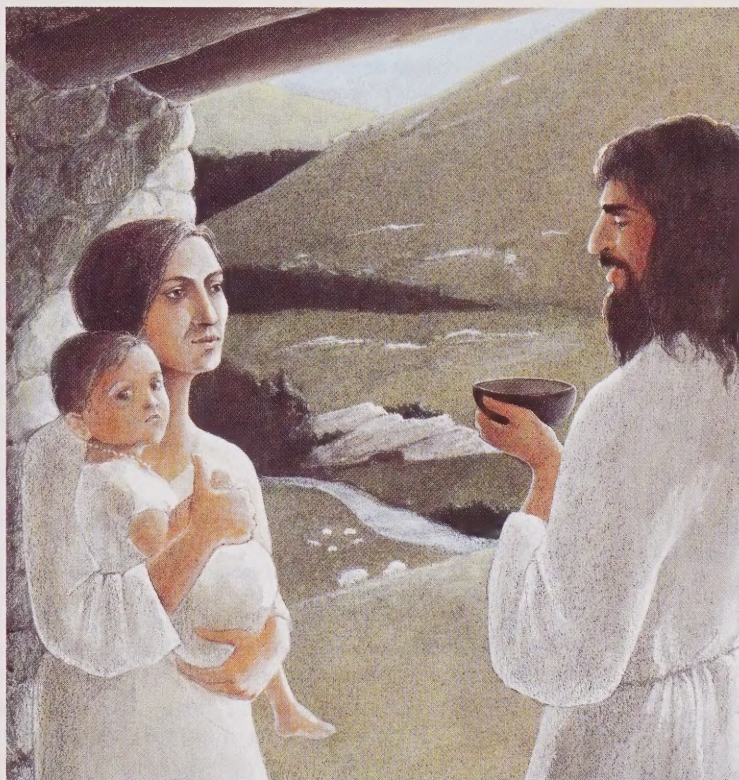
11

GROWING COLLECTIONS

41

MUSEUM NOTES

The McCord Museum



13

Down on the Farm: A Neolithic Site in Jordan

Dan Rahimi

What caused the demise of a sophisticated society in ancient Jordan?

18

Conscious Opinions

Jay Ingram

Is consciousness a uniquely human trait?

24

Elegance from the Boudoir

Peter Kaellgren

A silver toilet service is a stunning symbol of the cultural and social revolutions in 17th-century England and France

32

An Elizabethan Settlement in Arctic Canada

Robert McGhee and James Tuck

Controversy rages over the preservation of the first North American site that the English attempted to settle

45

BOOK REVIEWS

- *The Story of Corn,*
- *Lilies of the Hearth: The Historical Relationship between Women and Plants,*
- *The Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia of Invention and Technology,*
- *Islands of Hope: Ontario's Parks and Wilderness,*
- *Death in the Dining Room & Other Tales of Victorian Culture,*
- *The Run of the River*

47

LETTERS

48

LOOK AGAIN

Here's Looking at You



13



18

Cover
Brushes from an exquisite early-18th-century English silver toilet set. Such elegance in the boudoir evolved from the social and political revolutions in 17th-century England and France. For more details turn to the story on page 24.

PHOTOGRAPH
BY BRIAN BOYLE

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✿ EDITOR'S NOTE ✿

THE ELEGANT SILVER-HANDLED brushes on the cover of this issue of *Rotunda* are only part of an early-18th-century English toilet set, fabricated in the workshop of David Willaume I, and now in the collection of the ROM. Willaume, a Huguenot, fled to England with 100,000 fellow French Protestants in 1685 after Louis XIV renounced the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed their rights and freedoms in the predominantly Catholic country. The combination of French culture and skills with new-found English wealth gained through trade, commerce, and conquest led to an explosion of creativity in the decorative arts. In fact, by the early 18th century, England was the trendsetter. It would not be the first or last time that one country's betrayal of its citizens would lead to another country's gains. Peter Kaellgren of the ROM's European Department explains how the Willaume service symbolizes the society for which it was created.

More often than not the material remains of a society, especially an ancient one, are far more fragmentary. Dan Rahimi, a ROM archaeologist, has been piecing together the most meagre evidence—bits of pottery, remnants of building foundations, and a modest grave—found in a region of Jordan, which has revealed the existence of simple settlements after 6000 B.C. that seem to have replaced the much more sophisticated large villages of an earlier time. What happened to the more complex society? Rahimi and his colleagues speculate that poor management of environmental resources in and around the rapidly growing villages brought about the society's demise.

Misjudgement of resources by British explorer Martin Frobisher



led to the abandonment of the first English settlement in North America in 1578. Fuelled by the Elizabethan spirit of adventure, Frobisher ventured to the New World in search of the Northwest Passage. He established

a base on a small Arctic island when he thought that he had discovered gold. In the end Frobisher found neither gold nor a sea passage to the Orient. However, archaeologists who rediscovered the site 400 years later looked at it as a golden find, but for opposing reasons. Robert McGhee, an archaeologist with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and James Tuck, an archaeologist at Memorial University in Newfoundland, describe the hot debate between researchers who want to perform extensive and probably damaging excavations at the site and conservationists who believe that the site has little to offer archaeologists and feel it is more important to preserve it virtually untouched as a part of our heritage.

One of the goals of *Rotunda* is to make readers more conscious of the complexity of our world, past and present. In our last feature, science writer Jay Ingram explores the meaning of consciousness itself as he reveals the latest research on this subject. Scientists are trying to discover whether consciousness is something as undefinable as the human soul or whether it is the result of interaction among the 100-billion nerve cells in the human brain. This, of course, raises another question. Is consciousness a uniquely human trait or do we share it with some other living beings? Enjoy pondering these questions and others as you read this issue of *Rotunda*.

Sandra Shaul

SANDRA SHAUL



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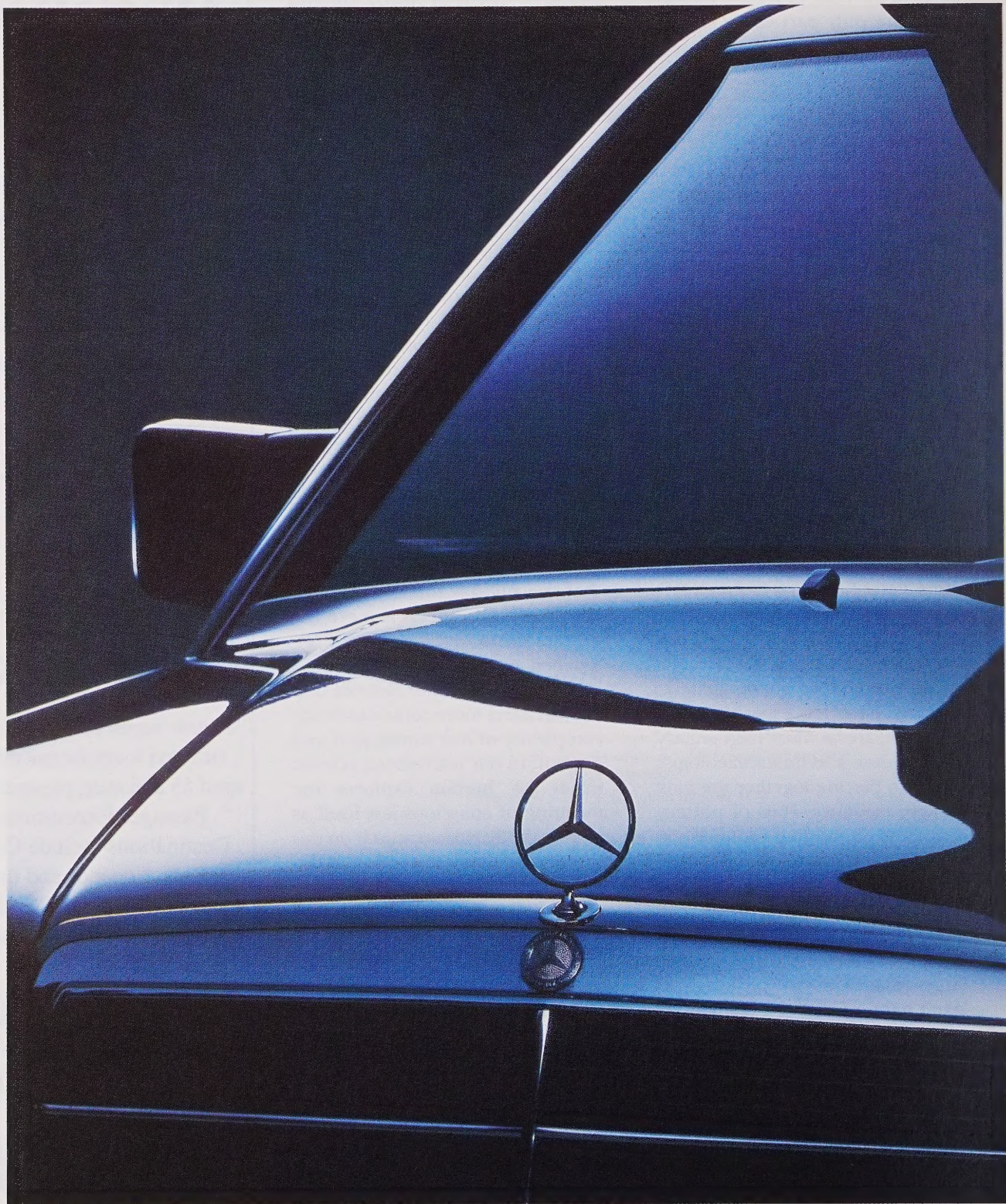
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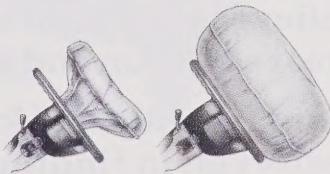
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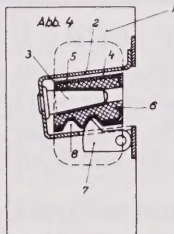


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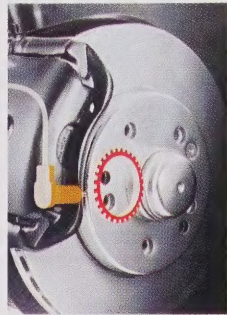


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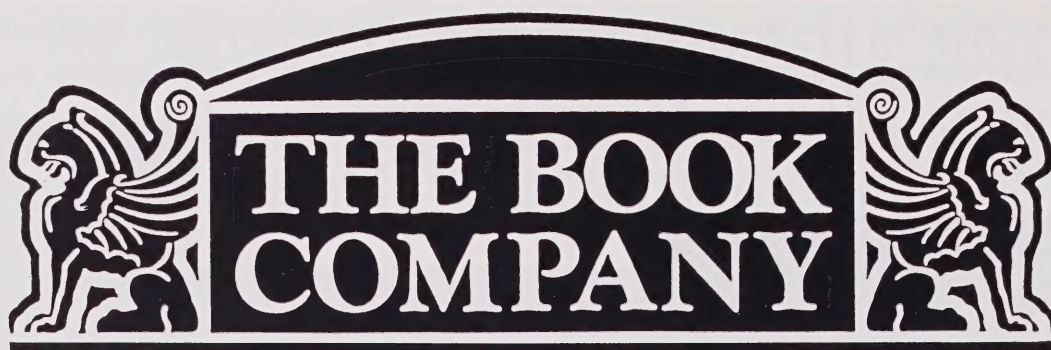


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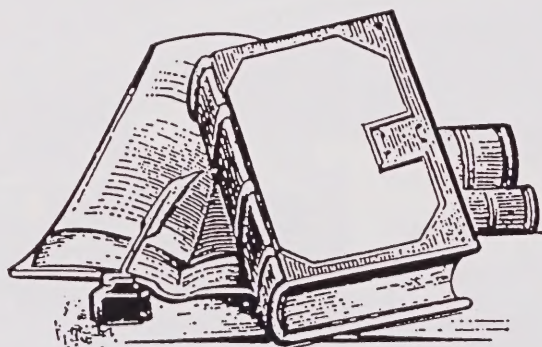


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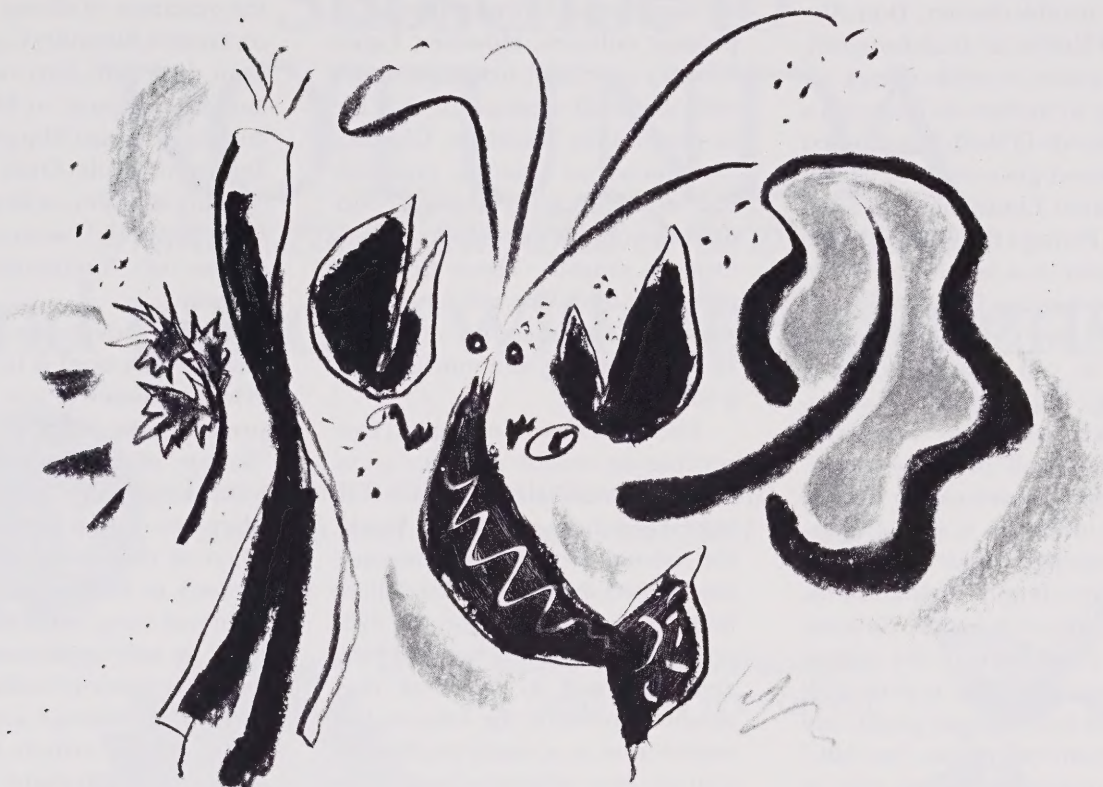


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Crayfish, peppers, onions, celery, and filé powder are common ingredients of New Orleans cuisine.

Cooking with Jazz

NEW ORLEANS (PRONOUNCED N'Awlins by its residents), is a city with the quality of a *sauce piquante*; it tantalizes the senses with unfamiliar sounds, sights, and tastes that crave discovery. The "Big Easy," one of the nicknames for this bustling American port city, is a cultural enclave with its own cuisine, music, architecture, patois, and world-renowned festival, Mardi Gras. Recently its cuisine received international attention as being a good example of a unique, regional American cooking style. However, real New Orleans cookery is an exciting potpourri of flavours created by contributions from the French, the Spanish, the native Indians, and the black Caribbean islanders, which began simmering away well before the Louisiana Purchase.

The native Indians were a semi-

nomadic tribe called Choctaws who moved as the river moved; they fished the bayous and farmed the swamps for hundreds of years before the first Europeans arrived. Shrimp, oysters, crab, mudfish, water hen, and crayfish were part of an abundant food supply. The Choctaws may have been the first to enjoy a tea made from the sassafras plant, which they also ground into a pungent powder used for seasoning. The French named this powder *filé* and it became the basis for the now famous *filé gumbo*.

A Québécois, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville (1680-1767), is considered the Father of New Orleans, which was officially founded in 1718. Settlers who accompanied him and his brother Iberville (died 1706) to the village, which existed at the turn of the cen-

tury, were Canadian grandsons of the pioneers who settled Québec in 1608. The French brought their own cooking traditions and techniques with them but, as their culture developed on *Louisiane* soil, local produce, fish, and game were incorporated into their culinary repertoire. The foremost French maxim, "First you make a *roux* [a flour-and-butter/oil sauce base]," held true even if only bear oil was available. A sauce is a sauce is a sauce. However, women, fine wine, and brandy had to be imported from France.

The Treaty of Paris in 1763 gave all French land west of the Mississippi, including the Isle of Orleans, to Spain. The Orleanians resisted Spanish rule, rioting, and demanding "the wine of Bordeaux, not the poison of Catalonia." King Charles

III of Spain was forced to send in his favourite troubleshooter, Don Alejandro O'Reilly, an Irish-born soldier of fortune, to settle things. Although he went down in history as a tyrant, "Bloody O'Reilly" established an organized governing structure and initiated Louisiana's first revenue tax. Perhaps the greatest Spanish influence was architectural. After two devastating fires the French Quarter of New Orleans was rebuilt entirely in old Spanish style, a charming, filigreed, city-within-a-city, which continues to attract tourists from all over the world. Though Spain governed for only 34 years, its influence is still obvious. *Creole*, meaning a native-born Orleanian of French and/or Spanish extraction, comes from the Spanish *criollo*—a child born in the colony. The famous jambalaya is a rice dish descended from Spanish paella, and the American expression, "two bits," owes its origin to Spanish rule in Louisiana. As Spanish silver coins were very scarce they were sometimes cut into eight pieces; thus, "two bits" became one quarter.

Cajun, a term closely associated with New Orleans cookery, comes from the Acadians, the French Canadians who were deported from their homeland in Acadia (Nova Scotia). These farmers and fishermen were enticed by the Spanish to the bayous and prairies of Louisiana with free land, tools, livestock, and transportation. The *Cajuns* learned to live off the bounty of the land. Even though they worked hard, they ate well and enjoyed life; a popular greeting, "Laissez le bon temps rouler" (Let the good times roll) typifies the *Cajun* attitude.

One of the best-known *Cajun* dishes, red beans and rice, was a great one-pot Monday meal, which simmered on the back of the stove while the washing was done. This slow-cooked bean dish resembles the classic bean dishes of other countries such as French *cassoulet* and Portuguese *fejoada*. A big black stew pot was always kept on the back of the stove and whatever was grown

in the yard, caught in the bayou, or shot in the woods ended up there, the same *pot au feu* that is used in all peasant cultures. However, *Cajun* cookery can claim true ascendancy with the small crustaceans that are so plentiful in Louisiana. Crayfish, also known as crawfish, crawdad-dies, mudbugs, and *écrivisses*, epitomize the unique personality of New Orleans cuisine. These delicious creatures look like miniature lobsters—the largest are no more than 10 to 13 cm long and much of that is inedible claw.

There is a charming legend concerning the crayfish and the *Cajuns*. When the Acadians were forced to leave their homes in Nova Scotia, the lobsters were very sad because they missed their friends terribly, so they decided to follow them to their new home. The journey was long and hard and by the time they reached Louisiana the lobsters had wasted away to a much smaller version of their original selves. Their friends, however, thought them sweeter than ever. Crayfish begin to appear in November and reach their peak in May or June. They are eaten by hand, after being simply boiled, as well as in a variety of other ways: fried crayfish tails, *étouffée* (smothered crayfish), *ragoût d'écrivisses* (stew), crayfish bisque, pie, and on and on. Many a tourist leaves New Orleans airport lugging several packages of flash-frozen mudbugs for later enjoyment.

Before my trip to New Orleans I had encountered some confusion in the descriptive terminology of the cuisine. Was it *Cajun* or *Creole*, or were the two terms synonymous? After attending Cookin' Cajun Cooking School under the direction of Susan Murphy and eating in many different restaurants, I concluded that *Creole* cooking could be described as urban New Orleans while *Cajun* is Louisiana country. *Creole* is Oysters Rockefeller created by Jules Alciatore at the famous Antoine's Restaurant, est. 1840; *Cajun* is *filé gumbo*, a one-pot concoction that may contain oysters, sausage, chicken, crab, or even squirrel and ar-

madillo, whatever the hunter or fisherman was able to catch. *Creole* is the grandeur of dining at Arnaud's on Oysters Bienville; *Cajun* is glazed roast duck with dirty rice, dancing, and fiddle music at Mulate's. According to Susan Murphy the "Holy Trinity of both *Creole* and *Cajun* cooking is onion, celery, and green bell peppers," accompanied by dashes of "Louisiana perfume"—garlic.

In New Orleans cookery, as in its jazz, the key word is improvisation. When it comes to jazz we may appreciate the special sound or "flavour" of each instrument but the most enjoyable moments come when the group "takes it home," when all the players improvise collectively to form a joyous and harmonious song. And likewise with food, we may appreciate the special taste or texture of individual ingredients but creating a superb and exciting dish by artfully bringing together what's available is the true mark of great improvised cooking.

CHICKEN AND ANDOUILLE

FILE GUMBO

This recipe is courtesy of Cookin' Cajun Cooking School.

Ingredients

- 1 frying chicken, cut up
- 700 gm (1-1/2 lbs.) Andouille (firm, red, seasoned sausage) or garlic sausage
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) oil
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) flour
- 500 ml (2 cups) chopped onion
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) chopped green bell pepper
- 250 ml (1 cup) chopped celery
- 1.5 l (6 cups) chicken stock
- 3 cloves of garlic
- salt and pepper
- Cayenne pepper
- thyme
- bay leaves
- *filé* powder
- green onions and parsley

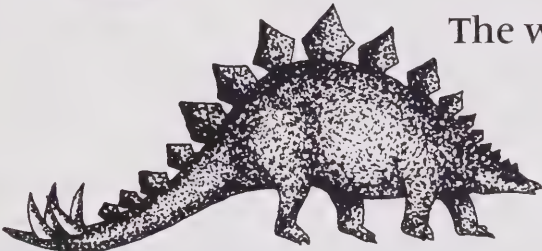
Method

In a heavy pot or Dutch oven brown chicken and sausage in some oil and set aside. In the same pot, make a dark brown roux with remaining oil and flour. Add onions and cook

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until brown. Add bell pepper and celery. Cook for five more minutes. Add chicken stock, garlic, and other seasonings, except for the *filé* powder, to taste. Bring the mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to simmer. Add chicken and sausage and continue to simmer mixture for about 2 hours, until meat is tender. Serve over boiled rice. Garnish with green onion and parsley. Add *filé* powder at the dinner table. Serves eight.

OYSTERS ROCKEFELLER

The original recipe, created at Antoine's to replace snails, which had to be imported from France, has never been divulged. The following recipe is courtesy of Fred Luk, Filet of Sole Restaurant, Toronto.

Ingredients

- 85 gm (3 oz.) spinach leaves
- 113 gm (4 oz.) fresh fennel (bulb only)
- 5 fresh peeled and chopped shallots
- 57 gm (2 oz.) green onions
- 3 anchovy filets

- 28 gm (1 oz.) fresh parsley
- 30 ml (2 tbsp.) black pepper
- 57 gm (2 oz.) grated Parmigiano Reggiano
- 1 jalapeno pepper (optional)
- 5 ml (1 tsp.) Tabasco sauce (optional)
- 85 gm (3 oz.) unsalted butter
- 24 oysters (approximate)

Method

Purée all ingredients, except oysters, in food processor. Cook mixture over low heat for 5 to 9 minutes, just to get rid of the raw taste of the vegetables. Salt mixture to taste. (Mixture may now be refrigerated for up to 3 days.) Open raw oysters leaving oyster meat and liquid on the half shells. Cover each oyster with the vegetable mixture. Bake in a 350° F oven until just bubbly, about 10 to 12 minutes.

BANANAS FOSTER

New Orleanians love dramatic desserts. This recipe is from the Cookin' Cajun Cooking School.

Ingredients

- 3 bananas

- 113 gm (4 oz. or 1 stick) butter
- 250 ml (1 cup) brown sugar
- 5 ml (1 tsp.) vanilla
- cinnamon
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) banana liqueur
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) rum
- vanilla ice-cream

Method

Slice the bananas lengthwise in three pieces, then cut the pieces in halves and set aside. Melt the butter in a frying pan or skillet, add the brown sugar and a bit of cinnamon, and cook over low heat, stirring until a thick paste is formed. Add vanilla and banana liqueur; stir well and cook for 3 minutes. Add banana slices and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes, basting the banana slices well with the sauce.

Heat the rum in a metal cup. Ignite the rum and pour it over the bananas. Stir well to blend, then serve the bananas and sauce over vanilla ice-cream.

BY GERALDINE RUBINO

Geraldine Rubino is a Toronto-based wine and food writer

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❖ GROWING COLLECTIONS ❖



Top: A female figurine of the Amlash culture of northern Iran.

Bottom: A magnificent and rare Achaemenid cylinder seal (left) and a clay imprint from the seal.

Two Splendid Additions to the Museum's West Asian Collections

Through the generosity of longtime friends of the West Asian Department, the collections have been enhanced by two major acquisitions.

The first is a ceramic figurine of a female from the Amlash culture of northern Iran. Objects from this

culture first appeared on the art market in the mid-1950s and were immediately popular. They caught the fancy of Western collectors in the same way that African art did in the early years of this century. The introduction of Amlash objects to the art market, and their immediate popularity, created a veritable orgy of fakery. Although it is not known

where the Museum's piece was found, it was purchased by Philip Torno long before it became fashionable and profitable to counterfeit Amlash figurines. Mr. Torno first showed me the piece in 1963, and I was pleased to authenticate it for him. Thermoluminescence testing bore out my evaluation. The figurine was donated recently to the ROM as

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a bequest of the Torno estate.

The highly stylized figure is characterized by its rather large buttocks and small breasts, common features of such objects that symbolized the Amlash culture's concept of female beauty 3000 years ago. Little is known of the Amlash culture. In the mid 1960s, Dr. Ezat O. Negahban of the Iranian Archaeological Service led the excavation to Marlik Tepe, making it the only Amlash site that has been excavated by a professional archaeologist. I visited Dr. Negahban at the site in 1965 just days after his expedition had been attacked by hoodlums hired by antique dealers out to acquire objects illegally. The trade of illegal goods still takes place.

A magnificent and rare Achaemenid cylinder seal with an Aramaic inscription is the other new addition to the West Asian collections. It was donated by Jacob Yeremian. Its inscription reads: "The seal of Ariyaramna, the scribe, son of Mazdayasna." Although Ariyaramna is a royal name, that is no reason to believe that the owner of the seal was a member of the Achaemenid royal family. However, the father's name indicates that the family was Zoroastrian. From iconographic and palaeographic evidence the seal can be dated to the late 6th or, more likely, the early 5th century B.C. Zoroaster, the great dualist prophet of ancient Iran, probably lived and preached in the 7th century B.C. His teaching had a great influence on Platonism and on early Judaism and Christianity. This seal is excellent evidence of the acceptance of his prophecy, by at least some in Iran, in the early years of the Achaemenid, the first Persian Empire. Visitors to the Royal Ontario Museum can enjoy seeing this seal on display in the new Mesopotamia gallery, which opened in January.

T. CUYLER YOUNG, JR.

T. Cuyler Young, Jr., is a former director of the Royal Ontario Museum and curator in the ROM's West Asian Department

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DOWN ON THE FARM A NEOLITHIC SITE IN JORDAN

What caused the demise of a sophisticated society in ancient Jordan?

DAN RAHIMI

THE WADI ZIQLAB, A SEASONAL STREAM, SNAKES DOWN HILLS in northern Jordan and deposits its winter waters in the Jordan Valley, which, at some 200 metres below sea level, is one of the lowest points on Earth. People living in the hills tap the ancient springs along the wadi, and a large lake, created when the wadi was dammed, and sustained by winter rains, is used to irrigate the valley plain. Since ancient times, humans have lived along the banks of the wadi, exploiting not only its rich resources of water, but also its plants and wildlife.

It is in this location that I and a team of Toronto archaeologists are studying the patterns of human settlement over thousands of years. Evidence of human activity from Palaeolithic times to the present abounds on the mountain ridges of northern Jordan. One morning, while walking from a farm site back to our house in the village of Deir Abu Said, a journey requiring less than an hour, we recovered stone tools of the Neanderthals (80,000 to 40,000 years old) and the Neolithic period (10,000 to 7000 years old), and pottery of the Bronze (ca. 2500 B.C.) and Iron (ca. 1000 B.C.) ages, and the Roman (350 B.C. to A.D. 350) and Islamic (beginning 7th century) periods. Such indications of almost continuous human occupation are not unique to the region. However,

the concentration of activity in this small and relatively undeveloped area offers a perfect opportunity to study human interaction with the environment.

Human settlement and climatic change have dramatically altered the environment since Palaeolithic times, sometimes with catastrophic results. For example, the domestication of plants and animals in the region, from 8000 to 4500 B.C., rapidly introduced new species that replaced those that had evolved over millions of years. Intensified agricultural production, the hallmark of the first village farming settlements, demanded the removal of great numbers

of trees, while herds of sheep and goats further denuded the land of its vegetation.

Professor Edward Banning of the University of Toronto set out as a graduate student in 1981 to survey and map the archaeology of Wadi Ziqlab. With the permission of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and in the company of its regional inspector, Mr. Hikmat Ta'ani, Banning began an intensive inspection of the wadi's plains and slopes. Setting out before dawn, Banning and Ta'ani would start their hike in the dry wadi bed and work their way up the steep slopes and ravines of the water-cut terrain. They would climb into caves and scramble up rock slopes, finding their only sound footing on



Tabaqat al-Buma, with its acre or two of flat ground and reliable water source, is a perfect example of a pastoral site. This led archaeologists to investigate whether it was a pastoral site in ancient times as well. The subsequent discovery of the remains of permanent structures resulted in full-scale excavations during the summers of 1990 and 1992.

Dan Rahimi is an archaeologist and project manager at the Royal Ontario Museum

PHOTOGRAPH BY TAYLOR DABNEY

the paths left by goats that criss-cross even the least accessible mountainside.

Always looking for irregularities in the landscape that might indicate the ruins of structures, they became keenly aware of patterns in the ancient use of the land. Finding, mapping, and analyzing hundreds of surface scatters of pottery and stone tools, they began to understand the historical richness and diversity of the wadi.

Along the river bed down from the mountainside were many small pockets of flat land sheltered by the hills. Although used frequently today by Bedouin who erect their tents and tend their herds in the wadi, Banning noticed that the flatlands almost never had artifacts on their surfaces to indicate ancient settlement. Had rainstorms washed soil down the hillside and buried all traces of sites on the stream banks? After three seasons of surveying, Banning developed a hypothesis that he wanted to test: the suspiciously flat and regular terraces were the sites of ancient encampments as well.

Such use of small pockets of land was not typical of the early Neolithic period in Jordan, a time when large villages built on hillsides was the rule (see *Rotunda* Volume 21 number 4, 1989, "Ain Ghazal: A Neolithic Village in Jordan"). However, the large Neolithic villages suddenly and mysteriously disappeared around 6000 B.C., and a few tantalizing clues led Banning to wonder whether the small terraces might hold the answer to the great puzzle of the fate of the villages and their people.

The archaeology of Jordan is rich in early Neolithic sites, and their excavation has made an enormous contribution to modern knowledge and understanding of the ori-

gins of agriculture and early village farming. Since the excavation in the middle of this century of Neolithic Jericho, west of the Jordan River, sites belonging to the materially and socially advanced village cultures of what is now

called the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period were sought throughout the region. And indeed, large and sophisticated villages were found in the highlands of Jordan at 'Ain Ghazal, Wadi Shu'aib, and a series of other sites from the north to the south.

While lacking ceramic technology—these settled folk had no pottery at all—the villagers had developed a superb plaster technology; they plastered and painted the walls and floors of their stone-and-mud houses. They also created plaster art, producing the earliest known large statues of humans. Grains and legumes were cultivated and sheep and goats were raised. But as the villages grew larger so did the danger of disease inherent in living communally and in close proximity to livestock. The cost

of agriculture and technology was high: forests could not stand where fields and pasture were in demand. The production of plaster, which requires the firing of limestone in kilns, demanded a great deal of fuel. It is possible that the Pre-Pottery Neolithic people of the large villages destroyed their own livelihood through poor management of natural resources. Indeed, the large Pre-Pottery village sites were either abandoned or severely diminished in size and wealth, never to be replaced by large Neolithic communities in the later so-called Pottery period.

The question of why these settlements were abandoned and what kind of settlement, if any, did exist until the Pottery period was overshadowed for many archaeolo-



Above: Tabaqat al-Buma yielded a vast number of flint sickle blades but no objects that could have been used for defence or for hunting.

Below: Excavators also found some very intriguing black burnished pottery, scarcely known in Jordan in this period, but like that found only 20 kilometres to the west of the site.



gists by the exciting discovery of so many large Pre-Pottery village sites. Not so for Ted Banning who, like myself, had been an excavator at 'Ain Ghazal, the best-known Pre-Pottery site of the region. Banning's approach to archaeology is very much rooted in the complex interrelationship between human settlement and the environment. His survey of Wadi Ziqlab began as an attempt to discover whether particular types of sites, such as farmsteads, from different periods could be predictably associated with particular microenvironments.

In 1987, Banning, by then a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Arizona, sunk a few test trenches at a promising site located on a small flat at the confluence of two branches of the wadi, about 200 metres above sea level. The site was frequently occupied in recent times by black tents of the sort used by Bedouin, and also by village shepherds and farmers who wanted to be near their flocks and fields. First identified as WZ200, the site was later named Tabaqat al-Buma, "the place of the owl," in honour of the family of small owls nesting in the rock shelter above.

Tabaqat al-Buma is a perfect example of a pastoral site: an acre or two of flat ground near a seasonal stream with a perennial spring in the well-watered hills of the north. The natural vegetation here is oak and pistachio woodland. While some large oaks still stand, most of the indigenous trees were harvested long ago or eaten by goats. Olive trees and small fields of wheat and barley stand in their place. Although unusual for such sites, scatters of pottery were found on the ground, some the debris of modern times mixed with plastic containers and spent batteries, some Roman and Byzantine in date, and some from the late Neolithic.

Banning guessed that given its current use and its location and size, the small terrace might have been a pastoral site in ancient times as well.

Pastoral sites are always problematic for archaeologists because they are simply not very visible. They are small, their structures are few and generally insubstantial, and their occupation is sporadic. Villages and permanent settlements are much easier to find, and their relatively great number in this area has certainly skewed the archaeological record. Banning's environmental approach was unusual—he was looking for small settlements in places where they had not been sought before. The first trenches in 1987 were unusually productive. They uncovered stone architecture from the Neolithic and a very rare burial.

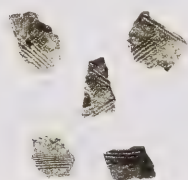
In the southern limit of the site, close to the water course, was a stone-lined tomb built on bedrock. In it were a few pieces of human bone and a group of Neolithic pots. The area had indeed been occupied during the later Neolithic, but the evidence of occupation no longer had a sporadic or short-lived air to it. Nomads and pastoralists do not usually build stone houses or dig elaborate stone-lined tombs. Tabaqat al-Buma clearly demanded proper investigation, and in the summers of 1990 and 1992 full-scale excavations were undertaken.

The 1990 excavation of Tabaqat al-Buma revealed a compact residential community, which we interpreted as a small farm. Four stone rooms were uncovered, all rather small and simple. The pottery was very crudely made, the product of local firing under poor conditions. The stone tool industry was simple. Only one standardized tool appeared with regularity, the sickle blade, a



Above: A hearth is visible in one of the rooms of a stone dwelling uncovered at Tabaqat al-Buma.

Below: In another room there is a huge stone mortar weighing at least 90 kilos, an indication that this may have been an area for food preparation.



rectangular flint flake with one serrated edge that showed the polish characteristic of flakes used for cutting grasses. Other tools were haphazard, not particularly well made, not regular in design. The site contained no jewellery or prestige items and almost no imported goods. Life was simple on the farm. It was probably inhabited by an extended family for a few generations, and all its material goods were locally made.

A final season of excavation, or so we planned, began in May 1992. As field director I led a crew of some 30 archaeologists, students, and workmen in the expansion of the excavations of previous years. Our aims were to explore the area in all directions to make sure we had defined the limits of the architecture and to document fully the stratigraphy (the layering of the soil deposits over time) of the excavations. At the same time we would try to reconstruct the ancient diet and environment through examination of carbonized seeds, plant remains, and animal bone. To our surprise, the site turned out to be larger than we had anticipated, richer in material goods, and more complex in its history.

Over the course of eight weeks, two new stone buildings were found. One contained a very well made small plaster surface and a huge stone mortar weighing at least 90 kilos (200 lbs.). Was this an area for food preparation? The site also contained, in the upper reaches of its deposits, some very intriguing black burnished pottery, something scarcely known in Jordan in this period, but well attested in the Esdraelon Valley, only 20 kilometres to the west of Tabaqat al-Buma.

Another large stone-lined tomb was found, covered with flat slabs of limestone more than a metre in length. In it were two skeletons, a young adult and an infant,

which lay near the adult's head. The bones of the adult were too damaged to immediately establish its sex, but laboratory examination will determine whether it is a male or a female. The child was buried wearing the only

grave goods in the tomb—some tiny shell beads around its neck. Were they mother and child? They appear to have been buried at the same time, and no cause of death is apparent. How did they die? We may never know.

Although we found a vast number of sickle blades—about 160 in this season alone—not a single intact arrowhead or projectile point appeared in the site. Were there no weapons for defence or for hunting? Was the Neolithic occupation, more than 7000 years ago, an idyllic time when very small farming communities functioned much more effectively than villages?

Archaeology is an inexact science. There are many things we will never know about the past. We will never know what the ancient Neolithic people of Jordan thought or

what their systems of belief were. We will never know why the adult and child were buried together at Tabaqat al-Buma. But it is possible for us to learn about major changes in human culture of the past and to measure the environmental parameters that precipitated the changes. Perhaps the populations of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic villages failed because they could not keep pace with environmental changes of their own making, and thus they ended up in small farming units like the one at Tabaqat al-Buma. We will test this hypothesis by looking for more farmsteads on the wadi banks. And we will have plenty to think about as we continue to hike the hills of Jordan, looking for the remains of a culture that abused its environment. ♡



Above: A large stone-lined tomb was found covered with flat slabs of limestone, which were more than a metre in length.

Below: In the tomb were two skeletons, a young adult and an infant, which appear to have been buried at the same time. Tests may show that the two people were mother and child, but how they died may remain a mystery.





CONSCIOUS



Is consciousness a uniquely human trait?

JAY INGRAM

T

ODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE HUMAN BRAIN AND THE technology to investigate it have developed to the stage where scientists can begin studying the brain's most elusive quality: consciousness. If it turns out, as most scientists expect, that consciousness is not the product of some sort of mysterious and evanescent mind, or soul, but is generated by the 100-billion nerve cells in the brain, then some important questions will follow. Why did the capacity for consciousness evolve in the human brain? Are there other living things that have it too? The answer to the latter question could shake our notions of what it is to be human.

Even though there are now brain-imaging techniques that allow scientists to watch as different areas of the brain light up while processing information, it is still going to be a struggle to understand how the brain produces consciousness. Merely defining the term is a problem for neuroscientists, many of whom like to quote the pioneer of American psychology, William James, who admitted that he understood exactly what consciousness was until he was asked to explain it. But if you choose several or all of the following descriptions, you'll be getting close to an idea of what brain scientists think consciousness is. It is the possession of self-awareness, and the ability to focus attention on a particular subject; it is the sensation of wakefulness that floods into your mind when you awake

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DENNIS NOBLE

*Jay Ingram is a Toronto science writer and broadcaster.
His latest book is Talk, Talk, Talk*



People who suffer damage to the back of the brain develop a syndrome called neglect. Such damage on the right side of the brain will cause them to neglect everything to their left. For instance, they will eat only from the right side of the dinner plate

in the morning; it makes possible the creation of mental pictures of times and places far removed from the present. Even knowing that you are you is part of your consciousness.

None of these are definitions of the phenomenon; rather, they are qualities of it, for one's conscious world is above all personal and private, which makes it impossible to describe that world in objective "scientific" terms. But in the last decade or two studies of some alterations of consciousness produced by brain damage have made it clear that there isn't just one kind of human consciousness. That in turn implies that other animals could have their own versions.

The most intriguing examples occur in people who suffer damage to the back of the brain and develop a syndrome called neglect. They become unaware of a portion of the space around them, and everything in that space. Such damage on the right side of the brain will cause them to neglect the left, with the result that they will eat only from the right side of the dinner plate, and read only the right half of any page in front of them. The Italian neuropsychologist Edoardo Bisiach demonstrated the strangeness of neglect syndrome in a particularly graphic manner. He asked two stroke patients with left-side neglect to describe what they would see as they viewed the Piazza del Duomo in Milan, first looking towards the cathedral from one end of the square, then again looking in the opposite direction, as if standing on the cathedral steps. Each time the two patients mentioned only the buildings on the right side, even though that meant that their first list omitted all the buildings included in the second list and vice-versa.

Patients like this do not realize they have only a partial awareness of the world. If queried, they will deny that they have any problem at all. Yet obviously the loss of some brain function has been accompanied by a parallel diminution of their consciousness.

A second group of brain-damaged patients provides a different kind of model for understanding consciousness. Blindsighted patients suffer damage to the the visual centres at the back of the brain, and although their eyes and optic nerves are intact, they experience anything from a blank in some part of their visual field to total blindness. Yet some of these patients exhibit a surprising—especially to them—ability to point relatively accurately in the direction of a light that has flashed somewhere in their blind space. When asked to point to such a light (of which they are completely unaware) they understandably argue that the exercise is pointless. Yet when finally persuaded to do so, they're more often right than wrong. Somehow the flash of light registers in the brain at a level below consciousness, resulting in the fact that the patient has knowledge but doesn't know it.

Neglect patients are unaware of their deficits; blindsighted patients are unaware of their abilities. Both are human conditions that make it easier to understand how animal consciousness might exist, and what it might be like. The cases of neglect show that consciousness, although somewhat abbreviated, may exist in the absence of a fully functioning human brain. Blindsight taken to the extreme would result in a brain that senses the world around it, and reacts, without ever knowing what it is doing. Such a brain would be a computer-like automaton, with no accompanying self-awareness. As the philosopher Gilbert Ryle said, the distinction between a conscious and an unconscious mind is the difference between knowing how to do something and knowing that one is doing something.

Do other animals have the same sort of self-awareness or consciousness that we do? Most scientists would accept that the great apes, chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans, probably do. But it's one thing to sus-



pect, and quite another to prove. Despite extensive efforts to communicate with the apes by sign language or plastic symbols, there have been very few unambiguous demonstrations that they have the same kind of mental life as humans.

One indication that they might was provided in the 1970s by the American psychologist Gordon Gallup, who anaesthetized chimpanzees and painted two small red marks on their faces, one on an eyebrow ridge, the other on the top of the opposite ear, two places that could be seen only in the mirror. When awake and presented with a mirror, the chimps immediately touched the dyed areas; they knew they were looking at reflections of themselves. But Gallup was never able to show that monkeys, gibbons, and baboons possessed that same kind of mirror self-awareness. He concluded that he had found an important boundary between animals that are self-aware and those that aren't: "If you do not know who you are, how could you possibly know who it is you are seeing when you look at yourself in a mirror?"

Gallup's experiments are hard to reconcile with a popular theory first put forward by the British psychologist Nick Humphrey, which states that at least the capacity for self-awareness (if not full-fledged consciousness) must have arisen in response to the need for social animals to be able to identify other individuals, understand them, and respond appropriately. Humphrey reasons that for animals that live in social groups, the most important elements of their environment are the other members of the group and so the ability to figure out what those animals intend to do would be an important asset. But in order to do that an individual must first be able to discover by introspection his or her own feelings; only then is it possible to recognize the same feelings in others. In other words, social animals have to have self-awareness. If this argument were true then Gallup's mirror test should have revealed self-awareness among many primate species other than the great apes, but it didn't. Of course it's possible that the mirror test is too artificial and narrow to be considered definitive.

We have probably become accustomed enough to the reports of intelligence in chimpanzees and gorillas (not to mention dolphins and whales) to accept the idea that these animals may indeed be aware in the same sense that we are, but there most of us draw the line. You could be generous and include dogs in this group of aware beings, not only on the basis of dog owners' stories but also on the fact that they descend from wolves, highly social animals in their own right. (As an owner of three cats I feel qualified to say that it would be much harder to make the case that cats are conscious.)

But some scientists and philosophers are willing to take the argument much further. They claim that the only reason we don't credit animals who have much smaller brains than our own with consciousness is that we are simply prejudiced against them. Presumably underlying that prejudice is the (perhaps unconscious) desire to maintain our uniqueness.

Let's move directly to an example that at first glance seems absolutely absurd: insects. Their behaviour appears to be perfectly explicable by assuming they are rigidly programmed automatons, a point made beautifully by the 19th-century French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre in his observations of the hunting wasp *Sphex flavipennis*. The female *Sphex* lays her eggs in a burrow, which she first provisions with a succulent, live, but paralyzed cricket. Having found an appropriate burrow, she brings the cricket to the mouth of the burrow, leaves it on the ground and goes inside briefly, then comes back outside and drags the cricket in. Fabre found that if, when the female was in-

Chimpanzees may be as self-aware as humans. Two small red marks were painted on the faces of anaesthetized chimps. When awake and presented with a mirror the chimps immediately touched the dyed areas; they knew they were looking at reflections of themselves.



Worker bees,
brought to an
artificial source of
nectar on a boat
in the middle of a
lake, will feed on
the nectar, then
return to the hive
to tell their fellow
workers. But the
other workers
refuse to fly to
the middle of
the lake. If they
were unthinking
robots, would
they not go
directly to
the boat?

side the burrow, he moved the cricket a little, she would come outside, drag the cricket back to its original position, then go back inside. Forty times Fabre moved the cricket, and forty times the female repeated her inspection of the burrow. It seemed that the female wasp would have replayed the same behavioural loop endlessly; she would never come out of the burrow and say to herself "Damn, I think I'll just drag that cricket right on in." She is trapped in an inflexible behaviour, which, were it not for the nosey entomologist, would serve her perfectly well, and this little story has always been taken as proof of the absence of any consciousness.

But is the story instead an example of scientists' unwillingness to believe that consciousness is possible in a brain the size of a pinhead? Daisy and Michael Radner in their book *Animal Consciousness* suggest an alternative interpretation. Imagine you are trapped in a burning highrise, with the only possible escape a dangerous leap into a fireman's net. Time after time you reach the window, only to be driven back by smoke and debris from the collapsing building. Wouldn't it be prudent, and intelligent, each time to check that the net is still there before jumping? After all, the firemen might have moved to another window in your absence.

The Radners' point is not to suggest that wasps are conscious, but simply that we are predisposed to accept such stories too readily as examples of primitive nonconscious behaviour. Even bearing that in mind, it's hard to imagine this particular wasp's thinking. Consider instead the honeybee. Biologist James Gould has shown that if worker bees are brought to an artificial source of nectar on a boat in the middle of a lake, they will feed on the nectar, then return to the hive to do their dance, indicating to their fellow workers the source of the nectar. But the other workers refuse to fly to the middle of the lake. They'll go to the far shore or the near shore, but not to the middle. If they were simply unthinking robots, would they not go directly to the boat? Do they refuse to go to the middle of the lake because they "know" that flowers are not normally found in the middle of a lake?

Donald Griffin, a bat expert who has long argued the case for the widespread existence of consciousness in the animal kingdom, has this to say about experiments like Gould's:

Even the smallest insect brain contains thousands of neurons, each capable of exchanging nerve impulses with dozens of others. The content and complexity of conscious thoughts and their range of versatility might be roughly proportional to the volume of the central nervous system, but an absolute criterion of mass necessary for conscious thinking is not supported by anything we know about the nature and functioning of central nervous systems.

Not only is it not known how many brain cells are needed for consciousness, it has also been impossible to find any particular piece of the brain that is essential for conscious awareness. Chimpanzee brains are bigger than monkey brains, but they haven't any additional parts. And despite the 19th-century furor over the hippocampus (satirized as the "hippopotamus major" in Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*), there is no one structure in the human brain that experts agree is, or even could be, the seat of consciousness. And as sophisticated and precise as imaging techniques are becoming, no one knows what consciousness looks like in a brain scan. We are doubtless in for surprises as the search for consciousness continues: we could one day listen as an ape, or a whale, tells us what it is like to hunt for termites, or to sing songs across the deep ocean. If we keep our minds perfectly open, we might even receive a similar communication from a much more unexpected source. ♣





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ELEGANCE FROM

*A silver toilet service is a stunning symbol of
the cultural and social revolutions
in 17th-century England and France*

BY PETER KAEELGREN


PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BOYLE

IN THE 1600S THE COINCIDENCE OF A number of major cultural and political events led to an explosion of creativity in the decorative arts. The all-pervasive baroque style encouraged the use of new materials in the creation of household furniture, utensils, and art. Silver became much more available as sources were discovered and mined in the New World. Trade and commerce boomed, resulting in increased personal wealth and a demand for household articles made of silver, and occasionally gold. And the revocation, on 18 October 1685, of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV of France precipitated the emigration of ap-

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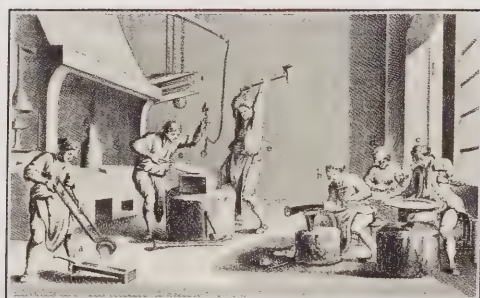
THE BOUDOIR



This exquisite early 18th-century English baroque toilet service is made from Britannia Standard silver. Some of the pieces display London hallmarks for 1725-26 and the mark of David Willaume I; other pieces are unmarked. The snuffers and stand are marked by Augustine Cortauld. Mr. Richard G. Meech, Q.C., donated the set to the Museum in 1981.

Facing page:
The *ferrière* (left) held orange-flower water for washing hands; the small *plummit* was used as a weight to help tighten stay laces on corsets.

Engraving of the interior of a silversmith's workshop. Reproduced from Denis Diderot's *L'Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1751-1772). The workmen are engaged in casting and hammering, typical activities for creating large pieces of silver.



Formality and status, based on Versailles, encouraged the use of expensive formal furnishings

proximately 100,000 Huguenots (French Protestants) to England. Many of these people were skilled craftsmen, belonging to the gentry and minor nobility, who brought their new technologies, designs, and skills with them.

Goldsmithing, or silversmithing as it is now more commonly known, was one of the few professions deemed worthy of the gentry and minor aristocracy. One Huguenot goldsmith who found himself in England was David Willaume I (1658-c. 1740). Willaume had been trained by his father in Metz. Among the most significant European treasures in the collections of the Royal Ontario Museum is a 27-piece silver toilet service created in 1725 at Willaume's workshop, which, according to Arthur Grimwade in his authoritative *London Goldsmiths 1697-1837*, was one of the workshop's most important pieces.

The sense of formality and status, which was largely based on court etiquette from Versailles and other royal circles, encouraged the use of expensive formal furnishings, even if they were, in many cases, primarily for show. By the mid-1600s Anne of Austria, Queen of France, and Cardinal Mazarin were collecting and commissioning art and luxuries on an unparalleled scale. Anne's childhood, spent at the Spanish Court, probably the wealthiest in Europe, presumably influenced her taste for silver furnishings.

Louis XIV inherited an important gold toilet service from her; a large casket from this set still survives at the Louvre. Rising standards of comfort and cleanliness, as well as those of formality and status, were

embodied in the *garniture de toilette*, a French invention that appeared in the mid-17th century.

Unfortunately, 17th-century French silver is extremely rare. Royal decrees of 1689 and 1709, which were very effectively enforced, resulted in considerable quantities of royal, private, and church plate being melted down at the Mint to help national finances. Tantalizing descriptions of five French and German *garnitures de toilette* for women and four shaving sets for men ap-

pear in the *Inventaire général du mobilier de la couronne* (*Inventory of the King's Possessions*), which was carefully kept during the reign of Louis XIV and published by Jules Joseph Guiffery in two volumes in 1885.

From these descriptions and several French services preserved in England, it is clear that the services made in London closely followed continental precedents. Such sets would normally include a *miroir de toilette* (looking glass); two or sometimes four candlesticks about 21 cm tall; a rectangular box for combs; one or more rounded or square bottles known as *ferrières* to hold orange-flower water for washing hands; one or two *gantières* (glove trays); a *boeste à poudre* (powder box); a box for *mouches* (beauty patches); one or more square or rectangular caskets for jewels, ribbons, hair ornaments, cosmetics, etc.; other scent bottles or covered containers for pomades, glue for patches, or cosmetic creams; a pin cushion; a *vergette* (a fat brush for cleaning clothes and fabrics); a smaller whisk known as a *brosse à peigne* for cleaning combs; a large salver; a ewer and basin; one shallow covered bowl or a pair; and, in the French and German sets, a number of cups for drinking, one or more plates, possibly cutlery, scissors, and a funnel for filling containers.

It is likely that the *garniture de toilette* was introduced into England with the restoration of Charles II in 1661. John Evelyn mentions that in 1673 Charles II presented his queen, Catherine of Braganza, with a set "all of massy gold" valued at £4000, although most English sets were silver or at best silver gilt. The finest followed French models with acanthus, flowers, and appropriate love scenes from classical mythology worked in *repoussé*. Even though French models remained influential right up to the 1690s, innovations and variations still occurred.

One of the French innovations is represented by a pair of small, heavy bottles with ring tops in the ROM's set. Ostensibly intended to hold perfume, they may have served an even more specialized purpose. In his diaries, John Hervey (1688-1727), first Earl of Bristol, noted a payment for silver in 1707, which included "a dressing weight for my dear wife." The silver-gilt toilet service that David Willaume I supplied to the Marchioness of Kildare between 1698 and 1722 includes a pair of heavy bottles with button hooks on the tops. The



hooks and a heavy bottle containing lead shot, preserved at Dunham Massey, suggest that the small bottles or *plummits* could have been used as weights to help in tightening stay laces on corsets.

English sets varied from continental ones in their number of small covered bowls. French sets usually had only one covered bowl or *écuelle*, which seems to have been used for broth or other foods. Pairs of small, two-handled bowls with covers were an integral part of most English toilet services. Whether they were used for food and beverages and/or as chap bowls for lotions and beauty preparations is still not certain. German-made services offered yet another variation with their inclusion of equipment for serving chocolate and coffee in the boudoir.

Contemporary with the ROM's service is a toilet service with a well-documented original provenance in the Francis Farrer

bear London hallmarks for 1724, as well as the mark of Paul de Lamerie (1688-1751), the most famous of the Huguenot silversmiths and indeed one of the most admired silversmiths of all time.

The original bill survives and provides some idea of the high price of such services. For 637.9 oz. of silver, de Lamerie charged 6s.2d. per ounce or £196-13s.-10d. Fashioning was another 5 shillings per ounce, adding £159-10s.-0d. The engraving cost 6 guineas, and with the "Glasses for whater," the mirror plate, and the trunk the final total came to £377-13s.-10d. (By comparison, G. M. Trevelyan states in his *Illustrated English Social History*, vol. 3, *The Eighteenth Century*, that "the best type of domestic or outdoor employee cost only £10 a year and his keep; many were content

with much less.")

If only a comparable invoice could be discovered for the Willaume service. Invoices of wedding gifts were often preserved, and if the Willaume service were a wedding gift, an invoice may still exist. Like much English silver, toilet services were frequently engraved with the arms of the bride and groom. Such markings could also suggest the family who may still possess papers that might provide documentation. The original baroque chased borders and engraved arms have been erased on all but one piece of the Willaume service; the script cipher MM under a Russian Imperial crown is engraved in their place.

When the service was first sold by Christie's, London, on 28 February 1923, the cipher was identified as being that of Maria Feodorovna, a princess from Württemberg, who was the consort of Czar Paul I and daughter-in-law of Catherine the Great. This seemed plausible because there was a long tradition of sending old English silver to the Russian Court as diplomatic gifts. Furthermore, during the early 1700s, the Russian rulers patronized



Facing page:
Candle sticks
with snuffer,
tray, and
scissors.

Top: Marks
of David
Willaume I,
Lion's Head
Erased,
Britannia Silver
Standard, and
date letter
for London
1725-26.
Bottom:
Detail of cast
ornamentation
panel on one
of the boxes
from the
Willaume
service.



Rising
standards of
comfort and
cleanliness
were
embodied in
the garniture
de toilette

Collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Study of this 28-piece set has been useful in interpreting the Willaume service. It was ordered by the Right Honourable George Treby on the occasion of his marriage at St. James's, Piccadilly, to Charity, elder daughter and co-heir of Roger Hele of Halwell South Pool and Fardel Cornwood, Devonshire. Like the the Willaume service of 1725, not every piece is hallmarked; however, most pieces



The Countess's Morning Levée, engraving after a painting by William Hogarth, 1745. The painting, which is in the National Gallery, London, was fourth in a series from *Marriage à la Mode*, c. 1743-45, by William Hogarth.



The English ultimately created their own distinctive products, which were widely recognized

Huguenot silversmiths in London. The crude quality of the engraving suggested that the cipher dated from the 1800s or later. Victor de Baux identified the cipher as that of Grand Duke Mikhail Mikhailovich (1861-1929), a cousin of the Czar, who was living in London in the early 20th century. This is difficult to verify, however, because Crichton Brothers, the prominent London dealers who anonymously sold the service, are no longer in business. One small box with period-engraved arms of the Harbin and Swane families was acquired during the 1950s to complete the service.

The Willaume service, which is firmly set in the baroque style of Louis XIV, is more conservative in form than the de Lamerie

service, which anticipates the rococo. There are in the two services a few forms of superb quality that are nearly identical in design but have no hallmarks. The creation of these small, specialized articles, including pairs of oval brushes, small whisks, and large octagonal scent bottles, would have been extremely

labour-intensive, requiring skilled casting and soldering to assemble. As such, they may have been supplied by a specialist caster and chaser from the Huguenot community, who could have manufactured them more economically. Perhaps Willaume and de Lamerie even used the same supplier. Alternatively, both silversmiths may have owned the same models and used them to cast the pieces themselves. This second option is unlikely, however, because all the other articles consistently bear their marks.

Both services are made from Britannia Standard silver, an alloy of 95.8 per cent pure silver that was required by law in England between 1697 and 1720 to prevent silver coins of 92.5 per cent, sterling standard, from being melted down to make luxury household goods. Britannia Standard silver was considerably softer and less durable than the sterling alloy, being closer to the 95.4 per cent alloy used for the best French silver. Silversmiths, adept at casting, created pieces in the French style. Casting techniques involve making an impression with a master model in fine, wet casting sand, known as sable, and scratching channels in the sand to allow the

molten metal to flow into the depressions.

The master model can be cast lead or brass, carved, fine-grained wood such as fruitwood, sculpted wax, or even an actual silver or gold object. Recent studies have revealed that since the Renaissance, models were widely used, loaned, and sold among workshops. Even though models from the shops of English goldsmiths have yet to be identified, they very likely resembled those preserved in European museums.

Models would have been used for casting the low-relief panels soldered into the sides of the boxes in English toilet services. Comparable motifs can be found in contemporary French design books. The panels are also similar to those found in French carved wall panelling called *boiseries*, which could mean that the inspiration or actual source for the English pieces may have been the small articles of finely carved boxwood or pearwood produced at Nancy in eastern France. The French pieces, with their carved reliefs set against a punched background of dots, have been traditionally attributed to the sculptor César Bagard (1620-1709), and most, like a casket in the ROM collection, are from toilet services.

After 1700 exportation of French silver *garnitures de toilette* appears to have ceased. Instead, English silversmiths supplied the market with models like the one that William Hogarth depicts in his painting *The Countess's Morning Levée* from the series *Marriage à la Mode*, c. 1743-45, which shows a looking-glass, a pin cushion, and boxes similar to the de Lamerie service.

The toilet service, like many fashions and innovations from the Court of Versailles under Louis XIV, was introduced into England. Eventually the English not only succeeded in imitating and emulating French decorative arts, they created their own distinctive products, which came to be widely recognized. Writing from Versailles on 23 April 1715, Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orléans, sister-in-law of Louis XIV, remarked on the kind greetings forwarded from the Princess of Wales:

How kind of the Princess of Wales to ask to be remembered. But give me your advice. What can I send her in return that might give her pleasure? Little things such as boxes, clocks and the like are nicer and better in England, and one can no longer send fashions, because the English have their own, which are followed here now. ♡

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AN ELIZABETHAN SETTLEMENT IN ARCTIC CANADA

*Controversy rages over the preservation of the first
North American site that the English attempted to settle*

ROBERT MCGHEE AND JAMES TUCK

FROM A DISTANCE, QALLUNAAQ ISLAND CAME INTO VIEW AS A SMALL, FLAT rock barely emerging from the sparkling water of Frobisher Bay. As our helicopter began a long, slanting descent, the island's barren and rugged surface gradually emerged. Circling the small patch of rock and gravel perched above low sea-cliffs, we suddenly recognized the features that the late ROM archaeologist, Walter Kenyon, had described to us so vividly. The cliffs at the northern end of the island had been cut by a deep, V-shaped notch, and at a little distance inland a great trench had been gashed across the surface.

These features were not produced by the natural processes that alter Arctic landscapes. In fact they are the visible remnants of one of the more bizarre episodes in the early European history of Canada. This tiny scrap of land, lying just off the shore of eastern Baffin Island, is the site of the earliest European mining venture in North America. It is also the place selected by the English for their first attempt to establish a colony in the New World, seven years before Sir Walter Raleigh tried to found a settlement in Virginia.

Walter Kenyon was a very talented archaeologist with wide interests, and a person with the ability to inspire others. One of his historical passions involved the four centuries of endeavours made by the English, and a few other Europeans, in search of the Northwest Passage. In 1974 he marked the 400th anniversary of the first Northwest Passage expedition—led by Martin Frobisher—with an ambitious project: he revisited Frobisher's main base on Qallunaaq Island to investigate the archaeological remains of the expedition.

Kenyon was the first archaeologist to attempt a research project on the island. His short field season, plagued by travel problems and terrible weather, was vividly reported in a fine book entitled *Tokens of Possession*, published by the ROM. He often talked of returning to the island and undertaking further research, but such an endeavour was thwarted by the difficulties and great expense of arranging travel to the outer fringes of the eastern Arctic. By the mid-1980s, when Arctic development had resulted in less arduous travel conditions, Kenyon's health was failing. He died in 1986.

The ship's trench, which can be seen in the illustration on the facing page, cuts through the cliffs at the northern end of Qallunaaq Island. It was excavated as a mine by Frobisher's men, but also served as an access ramp to the island surface, and as a cache in which the supplies for the planned colony were buried.



Facing page:
Members of Martin
Frobisher's 1576
expedition to
Qallunaaq Island
found black stone,
declared high-
grade gold by one
English assayer.
This led to an
Elizabethan
Arctic gold rush.
Illustration by
Francis Back.
Courtesy Canadian
Museum of
Civilization and
Francis Back.

Robert McGhee is an archaeologist with the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and author of the recently published Canada Rediscovered. James Tuck teaches archaeology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He is best known for his investigations of the 16th-century Basque whaling station at Red Bay, Labrador

The Meta Incognita Committee, chaired by Professor T. H. B. Symons of Trent University who also chairs the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, was established in 1990 to coordinate work proposed around the Frobisher site. We were commissioned by the committee to assess the archaeological remains and to note any potential threats to their existence. The site was attracting tourists, and a large-scale archaeological project had been proposed by the Smithsonian Institution to mark the quincentenary of the Columbus voyage.

In the summer of 1991, we found ourselves facing the ruins of Frobisher's base. Like Kenyon, we experienced the odd sensation of realizing that many of the human marks on the landscape were not fresh; they were more than 400 years old. In Kenyon's words, Qallunaaq Island was a small time-capsule of Elizabethan England, adrift among the ice-floes of Arctic Canada.

The story of Qallunaaq Island begins in England during the reign of Elizabeth I, the period that saw the simultaneous development of English sea power and colonial aspirations. The more ambitious mariners, together with mercantile backers who hoped to profit from a patriotic venture, initiated maritime projects, including the search for a northern trade route to the Orient.

The first coherent description of the search for a northern passage appeared in *A Discourse of a Discoverie for a new Passage to Cataia*, written by Sir Humphrey Gilbert. Sir Humphrey's *Discourse* was printed in 1576 in order to attract support for an expedition undertaken by Sir Martin Frobisher.

Frobisher set off into the northwestern Atlantic in the summer of 1576, following sailing directions that may have come from seamen's stories of the old Norse colonies in Greenland. He did not find the Northwest Passage, but instead discovered Baffin Island and explored the island-filled bay that now bears his name. An Inuk was kidnapped and taken back to England to prove the discovery of previously unknown lands, and samples of rock and vegetation were gathered "in token of Christian possession" of the new country. One of the rock samples, a black stone, was submitted to various assayers and alchemists; most declared it worthless, but one pronounced it to be high-grade gold ore. Thus started the first gold rush in Canada's history. The Company of Cathay was formed, and Queen Elizabeth herself invested £1000.

The following year Frobisher led three ships on a mining expedition to the area, which had been named Meta Incognita (the unknown shore) by Queen Elizabeth I. No ore could be found at the location where the original stone had been picked up, but an abundance of similar black rock was discovered at a small island, which Frobisher named for the Countess of Warwick. Over the next few weeks 150 tonnes of this rock was mined and loaded, and brought back to England where special smelters were to have been built. The following spring an even larger expedition, consisting of 15 ships and more than 400 men, arrived in Baffin Island waters.

In 1991 modern archaeologists set up camp in the same sheltered area selected by Frobisher's party 400 years before.



During the reign of Elizabeth I, a period of growing English sea power and colonial aspirations, ambitious mariners like Martin Frobisher hoped to profit from patriotic ventures

Headquarters for the 1578 expedition were established on the Countess of Warwick's Island, and mining of the black rock began immediately. Some of the miners lived in tent camps ashore, and a few small workshops were built for assaying the ore. Mines were also opened on nearby coasts where additional ore deposits were discovered. At the same time preparations were made for the establishment of an English colony that could stockpile ore and establish commercial relations with the native population. Eighteen months' supplies for 100 men were unloaded, and peas and grain were planted among the rocks "to prove the fruitfulness of the soyle against the next year."

The scheme was abandoned, however, when it was discovered that supplies had been underestimated, and that half of the prefabricated barracks

brought out from England had been lost with a ship that was sunk by ice. By late August the weather was deteriorating, the ships were laden with more than 1200 tonnes of ore, and it was decided to leave for home. But before abandoning the Countess of Warwick's Island, the supplies for the erstwhile colonists were buried and a small masonry house was built in order to ascertain "whether the snowe coulde overwhelme it, the frosts breake uppe, or the people dismember the same." In order to encourage the friendship of the Inuit with whom the English had carried on sporadic hostilities and occasional abductions, the house was provided with "dyvers of oure countrie toyes, as belles, and knives, wherein they specially delight.... Also in the house was made an oven, and breade lefte baked therein, for them to see and taste."

Frobisher's ships left Baffin Island in a vicious September storm, never to return. By the following year it had become apparent even to the most optimistic of the venturers that the black ores, which had been mined and carried aboard ship with such labour and expense, were worthless. The Countess of Warwick's Island was left to the Inuit, who during the

summers of 1577 and 1578 had warily but closely watched the activities of the English. Soon after the English departed the Inuit must have ventured ashore in search of any trace of their countrymen, who like the Inuk captured by Frobisher on his first voyage, had been taken away. What they found instead were the materials buried or left behind by the English.

Frobisher was in disgrace, and the location of his new land was lost to historical memory. For three centuries it was generally thought that Meta Incognita lay somewhere in southern Greenland. Then in 1861 the Inuit of Baffin Island told the American explorer, Charles Francis Hall, about Countess of Warwick's Island, which they referred to as Qallunaaq (White Man) Island, where they still collected occasional fragments of red tiles left by a party of white men who had lived there long ago. Qallunaaq is the name that is still used locally; however, Hall wrote the island's name as "Kodlunarn," the name retained on modern maps, and identified it as the long-lost gold mine of Martin Frobisher.

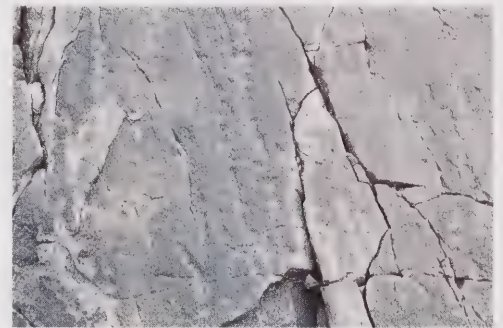
A rock face adjacent to the ship's trench still bears the scars of the hand-mining tools used by Frobisher's men.



An aerial view taken from the south shows the evidence of Elizabethan activity.

The remains of the Frobisher house appear as a small, light-coloured patch at the central summit of the island, while most of the other structures are located in the green vegetated area to the northeast.

The reservoir mine lies in front of the green area, and the ship's trench mine can be glimpsed on the far coast.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT MCGHEE

A walking tour of Qallunaag Island can be completed in half an hour. The remains of the Frobisher expedition's mining activities, Elizabethan workshops, and a small house, are clearly visible



Portrait of Sir Martin Frobisher. Courtesy of the Trustees, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

In spite of some visits by archaeologists and casual visitors since Hall's time, the island still looks much as it did shortly after Frobisher left, when the standing buildings had been demolished by the Inuit in search of wood and iron nails. A walking-tour of the island can be completed in half an hour, and would likely start on the rocky northern shore, one of the few points at which the heights of the island can be reached without scaling vertical sea-cliffs. The visitor ascends along the steeply sloping floor of a narrow notch cut through the rock by Frobisher's miners. This feature was named the ship's trench by Hall because Inuit legend stated that the Frobisher expedition, the ancient Qallunaat (white men), had used the feature as a slipway to build a ship. In fact it was more likely the first mine opened in 1577; the marks of hand-mining are still clearly apparent along a vertical rock face forming one side of the trench. Mounds of spoil are heaped at either side of the trench, and a small pile of black ore lies where it was discarded.

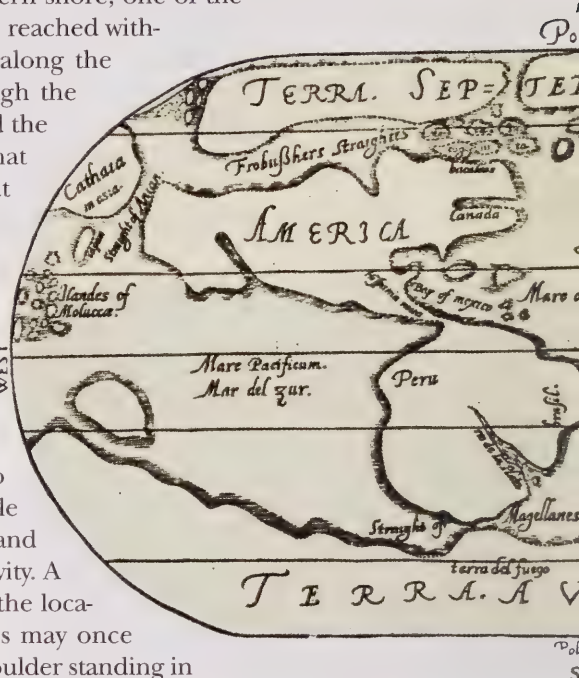
A field of boulders slopes gently upward from the top of the trench to the summit of the island. To the left of the trench lies a relatively flat area, a little more than a hectare in extent, with a surface of silt and gravel. This was apparently a centre of English activity. A few oval to rectangular patterns of boulders mark the locations of tents, while two scattered heaps of stones may once have covered small caches of supplies. An oblong boulder standing in a level, silty patch of ground may be a crude headstone marking the burial of an English miner or seaman.

The most prominent man-made feature lies at the southwestern edge of this area. It is a large trench, 25 metres long and 5 metres wide, which was labelled by Hall the reservoir or mine. Although the trench holds water during the early summer, it is very unlikely that it ever served as a reservoir.

It is definitely a mine, and the orientation is the same as that of the ship's trench, as if a single vein of ore was being followed across the island. As with the ship's trench, earth and rock spoil are heaped on the surface to either side, and there is a pile of discarded ore at the southwestern end.

From the reservoir, a shallow, grass-covered valley about a quarter of a hectare in extent slopes eastward to the coast. Four jumbled piles of boulders and turf emerge from the surface vegetation, apparently the remains of foundations for small, crude structures about five metres across. These structures were probably Frobisher's workshops: the forge, smithy, and assay shops where preliminary tests were run on the ores brought back from various mines in the vicinity. Tiny pieces of coal, charcoal, and smelting slag, and fragments of small assay crucibles bear witness to Elizabethan industrial activities.

The feature that seems to have attracted the greatest amount of past archaeological attention lies among rock outcrops at the highest point of the island. This is the small house, built at the end of the final Frobisher expedition, which was filled with objects designed to entice Inuit interest. What remains today is a jumble of boulders lying amid a pile of mortar or plaster fragments. The foundations appear to have been thoroughly dug over, and all of the artifacts left by the Frobisher party have long since been removed. Yet this small, tumbled ruin, lying in isolation at the summit of Qallunaag Island, should be appreciated as a remarkable heritage object: it is, after all, the remains of the first house built by the English in the New World.



James Beare, an associate of Martin Frobisher, drew this map of the world. Courtesy of the Hakluyt Society.

The isolation, which has protected the visible remains of Frobisher's expedition, has come to an end. Unregulated tourism and large-scale excavations of the kind proposed by the Smithsonian Institution would have inevitably left lasting scars that would compromise the future use of the island as a heritage resource. In opposing such a plan, we proposed to assess the archaeology of Qallunaaq Island in such a way that no obvious scars would be left on the island's surface. The Friends of the Canadian Museum of Civilization provided the funds needed to undertake the project.

Over a period of two weeks in late summer 1991, we completed a number of projects. Lee Jablonski, an engineer who donated his time and expertise, made the first accurate map of the island and its archaeological remains. Don Hogarth, a geologist from the University of Ottawa with a longstanding interest in the Frobisher mines, evaluated the evidence for natural erosion and was able to assure us that the sites were not immediately threatened by that force. Rob MacIntosh, a student from Arctic College in Iqaluit, made a comprehensive plant collection from the vegetated industrial portion of the site. From this information, we hope to obtain an estimate of the amount of damage that the landscape would sustain from the trampling feet of tourists, and the rate at which it might recover from such damage.

Most of our efforts were devoted to three areas of archaeological interest: the ship's trench, the Frobisher house, and the workshop structures in the industrial area. The ship's trench was seen as the most likely place to find buried and cached material left by the English. One account of the final Frobisher voyage states that, before leaving the island, "We buried the timber of our pretended fort, with many barrels of meal, peas, grist and sundry other good things." Another account reports that these things were "hidden and covered in the place of the mine."

We began the search for this material by digging a trench across the ship's trench at a location just above the level of high storm tides. As this is the deepest portion of the ship's trench, it was the place where frozen and preserved material would most likely be found; it was also the most likely location to look for evidence of the ship-building reported by Inuit legend. The heavy boulders covering the surface in this area would allow us to easily disguise the scars of our excavation.

After removing the boulders, the excavators began scraping and sifting through a jumble of broken rock and silty soil, finding the occasional small fragment of red ceramic tile, charcoal, or preserved wood, and one small, unidentifiable piece of rusted iron. Most of the wood fragments appeared to be of oak, and were quite possibly the remains of broken barrel staves; this conjecture was supported by the finding of several lengths of split willow or osier, identical to the 16th-century barrel hoops found at Basque sites in Labrador.

We also found evidence of what some of these barrels had contained: several small, round, black objects could be easily identified as dried peas, which had been carbonized in the soil. There were many amorphous lumps of black organic material, which were more difficult to identify, but which we guessed to be the carbonized remains of ship biscuit. This staple

Inuit spearing waterfowl, from Dyonse Settle's *True Report...*, 1577. Courtesy of the Trustees, British Museum.





Facing page:

A scene of Frobisher's men battling Inuit archers, painted by John White, may have taken place on a small island just to the north of Qallunaaq. Courtesy of the Trustees, British Museum.

Below: Patterns of boulders on the gravel surface of Qallunaaq mark the position of Elizabethan tents.



food of maritime enterprise is still eaten in Newfoundland. We had some Newfoundland hardbread in our own supplies, and thus were able to conduct a small experiment by carbonizing some of it on our Coleman stove. The bread turned into a substance that was visually identical to what we found in the trench. An analysis conducted by the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa led to an inconclusive identification of the unappetizing substance as 400-year-old ship biscuit.

The material filling the base of the old mine extended to a depth of at least 1.5 metres; at this depth we judged our excavation to be close to bedrock and too susceptible to collapse for safe work. However, we had found the place where the Frobisher expedition had buried the supplies for their planned colony. They probably covered the

cache with a thick layer of boulders, but the Inuit soon discovered it.

Next, we turned our attention to the house that the English had built at the top of the island. Here we were careful in selecting areas where minimal excavation would tell us how much of the original structure was left. We soon found, to our surprise, that much of the foundation was intact, despite the disturbance that had tumbled the walls and churned over the interior of the building. The walls were built of boulders that had been roughly hammered to shape, and cemented with lime mortar; the yellowish mortar fragments,

which litter the area, contain small nodules of English flint, indicating that the mortar had been brought aboard ship.

The single room of the house measures 8 by 10 feet (2.4 x 3 metres) on the inside; each wall is two feet (0.6 metres) thick, and up to three courses of stone are still standing in places. The doorway probably lay under a pile of boulders at the southwestern corner of the room, a common location for the doorway and for the adjacent hearth in English cottages of the time. About 400 boulders, which had fallen from the structure, were counted and measured, giving us a very rough indication that the stone walls must have originally stood about one metre high. The upper portions of the walls were probably made of wood, which was salvaged long ago. Further information on the architecture of the Qallunaaq Island house will have to come from comparisons with contemporary English cottages or farm outbuildings.

After we had learned what we could from the house, we replaced the excavated earth, covered the exposed foundation with sifted soil, and shrouded the structure beneath a large plastic tarpaulin, which was thickly covered with boulders. This should protect the foundation from all but the most enthusiastic vandals who might visit the site. Now that we know the extent of preservation, we can return with the equipment and expertise needed to undertake a careful excavation of this unique structure. We even hope that a mould can be made of the foundation, from which museums can cast replicas of this fragment of early European heritage.

Our final project involved a search for other buried deposits or structures that might exist on the island. Since we wished to cause as little dis-



The jumble of boulders emerging from the only vegetated area of Qallunaaq Island is the remains of one of the four industrial shops operated by the Frobisher party 400 years ago. The barren gravel area to the left of the structure was probably created when the turf was stripped to insulate the walls of the shop.



The remains of the first house built by the English in the New World lie at the summit of Qallunaaq Island. The strings mark a recording grid of two-metre squares.

Conservation-ists feel that Qallunaaq Island's value as a unique heritage site outweighs the benefits of knowledge gained through destructive major archaeological excavations

**The
remains
of the
Frobisher
expedition
have been
protected
by isolation
rather than
by action,
but now the
isolation is
clearly over**

turbance as possible, we enlisted the aid of Jean Pilon, a geophysicist with the Geological Survey of Canada. Pilon has worked on the development of a device known as ground-penetrating radar, which detects buried features by sending electromagnetic signals into the earth.

For three days we walked the radar instrument, which resembles a large pair of feet attached to handle-frames, across the various features of the site. At every 10-cm step the machine beeps and sends a picture of the earth beneath it to a portable computer, where a profile view of the subterranean feature gradually builds up across the screen. Our first set of traverses covered the area around the possible headstone, and the radar received signals suggesting that there was indeed something buried about one metre deep to one side of the stone, but it was not clear whether the object was a human body or a large, isolated boulder. As the signal came from what appears to be an area of uniformly gravelly soil, there is a strong possibility that this is a human interment.

Traverses across the two large, cache-like boulder structures near the ship's trench were less conclusive. They showed no major burial deposit beneath the scatters of rock, but they did produce a signal suggestive of a single, barrel-sized buried object or boulder; they also indicated that the remainder of the mine contained deposits similar to those already excavated.

Radar transects were made across the remains of the assaying and metallurgical workshops in the industrial portion of the site. These showed that there were no stone floors, buried furnaces, or other major buried features of the structures, and that little would be learned by excavation. We were particularly happy with this result, since the excavations that had been proposed for these structures would have scarred the only vegetated area on the island. Small test-holes made in the structures by a Smithsonian Institution party in 1981 are still clearly visible. Indeed, two barren patches of earth near the structures almost certainly mark areas where the surface vegetation was dug up 400 years ago to provide insulation for the walls of Frobisher's workshops. Without Jean Pilon's ground-penetrating radar instrument, our attempts to determine the buried structure of these workshops would have left similar centuries-long scars.

Our work on Qallunaaq Island resulted from the developing controversy between "pure" researchers and conservationists in the field of archaeology. The researchers argue that these relatively undisturbed remains of Elizabethan activities are so rare, and so valuable, that they should be excavated for clues to early English mining practices, metallurgical techniques, and social conditions. The conservationists, which include us, respond that, although they appreciate the value of archaeological research, they are not convinced that the archaeology of Qallunaaq Island holds any major secrets. They consider that the island's value as a unique heritage site outweighs the benefits of any knowledge likely to be obtained by excavations that would leave long-lasting scars on the terrain. The Meta Incognita Committee agreed with the latter assessment, and has denied archaeologists access to the island's resources until such time as a heritage agency has committed itself to long-term responsibility for the site and its future.

We left Qallunaaq Island in a late-August snowstorm with the knowledge that whatever the arguments swirling around the island, its archaeology would soon be sealed by frost and hidden by snow for another long Arctic winter. Yet not long after our departure, the site received a visit from a large shipload of tourists.

A quarter-century ago the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada designated Qallunaaq Island as a unique heritage site of national significance. Since that time the remains of the Frobisher expedition have been protected by isolation rather than by action. The isolation is clearly over. We can only imagine the vigour with which Walter Kenyon would have defended this tiny island so full of history. ♡



The mezzanine of the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal shows the graceful architecture and restrained luxury of the building that houses one of Canada's top historical collections.

The McCord Museum

SOMETIMES, AS THE FRENCH SAY, THE more things change, the more they remain the same. And in the case of Montreal's enlarged and revamped McCord Museum of Canadian History, that's a very good thing. Although the museum on Sherbrooke Street has more than doubled its floor space and submitted to major cosmetic surgery throughout the original building, the McCord's admirers will rejoice to hear that its essence is not only intact but actually seems intensified.

The McCord's essence—an unselfconscious interest in Canadian history, a respect for original artifacts, and an all-important belief in the curiosity and intelligence of museumgoers—began with its founder. The son of a legal family prominent in Montreal since the 18th century, David Ross McCord, Q.C. (1844-

1930), was a passionate amateur of Canadian history. Nicknamed Ronshonni (the builder) by the Mohawks in recognition of his ethnological interests, he lobbied, unsuccessfully, for the establishment of a chair of colonial history at Oxford, and even redesigned the grounds of his family estate to mimic the Plains of Abraham. More important for posterity, he was an indefatigable, obsessive collector of Canadian artifacts—he called himself the “humble doorkeeper of the Canadian Valhalla.” In 1919, he donated his hoard of some 15,000 pieces to McGill University and the McCord Museum was born.

Born, but far from settled. The McCord began life in the Jesse Joseph house on the McGill campus, and a photograph shows a typical museum of the '20s and '30s—a

demanding and stodgy mix of display cases and picture-covered walls, a cross between a scholar's cabinet of curiosities and granny's attic. In 1936, the Joseph house was deemed dangerous (the McLennan Library now stands on its site), and the McCord was closed. It remained closed for 35 years, although donations continued and the collection, like some hibernating beast, never stopped growing. Finally, in 1971, the museum reopened its doors in McGill's former Student Union, a 1906 limestone building designed in the Italian palazzo style by Percy Nobbs. (Either students were significantly more decorous in 1906, or the university authorities hoped the urbane architecture would inspire them.)

Nobbs' graceful, subdued building suited the McCord's style, but

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK FERRIGAN

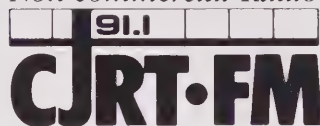
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MUSEUM NOTES CONTINUED

not its size. After years of negotiations and very sizeable support from the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation, the museum loosened its continuing ties with McGill, committed itself to a greater participation in the community, and designed an expansion.

Officially opened in May 1992 as part of Montreal's 350th birthday celebrations, the new McCord is a tactful elongation of the original building that manages to echo the restrained luxury of Nobbs' grammar—limestone blocks and copper-rimmed windows—in a contemporary idiom. The subtle melding of old and new continues on the inside, where the architects, LeMoyne Lapointe Magne in association with Jodoin, Lamarre, Pratte & Associates, have furnished new galleries, a library, lecture rooms, a documentation centre, a cafe, and a gift shop with appropriately tasteful new bells and whistles. (The washrooms alone, a chic and soothing mix of grey-green tiles, green granite, and chrome, should win some sort of design prize.)

But the new maple panels, two kinds of slate, and some very sparing use of audio-visual material have not turned the McCord's head. In a museological world characterized more and more by technological sleight-of-hand, interactive gimmickry, and what I think of as fear-of-reading (i.e., sparse and poorly conceived signage), the McCord's commitment to traditional values seems almost novel. Executive director Luke Rombout describes his goal as "a return to the integrity of the object," and he told *The Globe and Mail's* Ray Conlogue, "I wouldn't have thought it was possible to make a totem pole look insignificant until I saw how [the Canadian Museum of Civilization] had surrounded its poles with a papier-mâché village." Rombout, who seems as comfortable with David McCord's sensibility as with his treasures, promises, "We will never do that."

McCord himself would probably feel very much at home in the new

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museum. It's easy to imagine him enjoying, for example, the corner on the second floor where a high-style black walnut 18th-century commode stands cheek-by-jowl with a display of 20th-century milk-bottle caps. The bottle caps earn their keep not just through their nostalgic appeal, but because of the stories they tell, graphically and economically. In one smallish display case, museumgoers can absorb several chapters in the history of nutrition—the evolution of tuberculosis testing and the varieties of milk (Jersey, Guernsey, goats', among others), including fat content (from 2 per cent to 35 per cent, with all kinds of stops in between), which were once available from the local milkman. Typically, the informed, readable signage does more than simply present the exhibit: it also explains its point.

The bottle caps are part of the McCord's generous collection of archives, which now has its own permanent gallery. As a sign in the new gallery notes, David McCord believed that "a carefully chosen manuscript displayed next to an object would bring an object to life." His literate approach has resulted in archives that range from the publicly "significant," such as the Riel papers, to the scrapbook of a 1968 Toronto wedding.

The McCord's interest in manuscripts has not meant that more usual objects have languished for want of attention. Extravagant essays in Micmac beadwork; relief-moulded Victorian jugs; a floridly sentimental painting on velvet of St. Louis, King of France, presented to Papa from his *petite fille* Henriette in 1855—each telling object comes with judiciously considered commentary. Where some museums, if they have a dozen objects will display all twelve, the McCord is content with the thoughtful choice of one or two. There's no wasted space in the expanded quarters: even a small, slim, potentially dead area on the way to the second floor has become home to a trio of cast-iron stoves and a majestic 19th-century

ROTUNDA
the magazine of the Royal Ontario Museum

In the May issue of *Rotunda*...

Zuni People of the Southwest

By SUZANNE M. STIEGELBAUER



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MUSEUM NOTES CONTINUED

cow weathervane made of gilded tin.

Mila Mulrone recently donated a few outfits to one of the McCord's best-known collections, the costume collection; its inaugural exhibition in the new building was a witty combination of dresses from 19th-century Montreal and photographs from the William Notman Photographic Archives.

Arguably the brightest jewel in the McCord's treasure, the archives of the William Notman and Sons photographic empire are treated to a deservedly full display. Photographs from the enterprising Montreal firm, which captured Canadian belles, dignitaries, and skating parties, among others, for posterity from 1856 to 1935, have been chosen to illustrate various aspects of the Notmans' craft—cross-lighting, back-lighting, posing stances, and the various backgrounds available to enhance a sitter's dignity (library, parlour, Grecian pillars) or create a mood. In one unintentionally comic "winter" photograph, a Mr. M. R. Graham looks more hopeful than intrepid as he leans against a fence dressed in sheep's fleece (for snow); members of a curling club, their clothes dusted with coarse salt, pose in 1867 on a surprisingly plausible "rink" of polished zinc.

In the low-ceilinged, softly lit, pleasantly crowded feeling of some of its spaces, the McCord doesn't always seem like a thoroughly modern museum. It is, of course, but its links with Thomas McCord's cabinet of curiosities are reassuringly palpable. Making my way around the bur-nished new museum, I kept recalling the picture of its first incarnation in the Jesse Joseph building. Staid and dowdy as it was, it respected both the artifacts and the museumgoer; in that crucial sense, the new McCord is a chip off the old block.

The McCord Museum is located at 690 Sherbrooke St. W., Montreal. For information please call 514-398-7100.

KATHERINE ASHENBURG

Katherine Ashenburg is arts and books editor of The Globe and Mail

The Story of Corn, Women and Plants, and more

A FEW YEARS AGO IN HER WONDERFUL book *Much Depends on Dinner*, Margaret Visser made the point that corn is the most ubiquitous of foods. Betty Fussell, an American food historian, pursues the idea at greater length in *The Story of Corn* (Random House, \$37.50), a work whose prosaic title masks a text that's never less than fascinating. In a supermarket, she writes, "all the items but the fresh fish [have] made contact with some product or by-product of processed corn, be it syrup, oil or starch in one of the multifoliate, mostly inedible forms." Corn is an essential ingredient of stuff as different as shoe polish and cough drops, toothpaste and embalming fluid, pesticides and paint, lipstick and detergent. Because corn mutates with incredible speed yet cannot be grown without human help, it has also had immense political importance.

The importance of maize to the culture of aboriginal peoples in the Americas is well known. Fussell quotes Champlain's famous description of how the Iroquois he met along the St. Lawrence planted corn together with beans, so that the corn stalks would support the bean vines. It was probably the Portuguese who imported maize to Europe and also to Africa, where by the 16th century it had become the staple used to feed the slaves during their cruel passage to the New World. By that time, too, the Portuguese had introduced the Chinese to corn. Because it would grow on Chinese hillsides where rice and wheat would not, corn "helped produce a population explosion that began in the seventeenth century, quadrupled between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is now out of sight." Corn was thus the

key to feeding and hence manipulating the people. The author makes a case for corn being one of the instruments by which the Manchus overthrew the Ming dynasty. China remains the Earth's second biggest producer after the United States.

It was also in the 16th century that a French botanist, Jean Ruel, published a book, *De Natura Stirpium*, which identified maize as *Triticum frumentum* or Turkish wheat. Even today, corn is sometimes referred to in French as *blé de Turquie*. Our insistence on "corn" is the short form of the British settlers' "Indian corn." The adjective was necessary to acknowledge the usage in Europe, where all cereals, even wheat, were called corn (the German word *Korn* means grain). The nomenclature is naturally confused for no other reason than the plant's omnipresence.

There are thousands of varieties, more than of any other crop, though in broad terms there are a few big categories, classed according to the amount of starch in the kernels: sweet corn, flour corn, dent corn, popcorn, and flint corn (including the "northern flints" commonly grown in Canada). They have different ranks in different cultures. In recent decades, we have come to think of sweet corn as synonymous with corn-on-the-cob, but in Peru, say, it is the source of a national drink, *chicha*. The practice of popping corn in a fire is ancient (and archaeologists have found kernels that still pop after two or three millennia). But the present vogue for popcorn, which the author believes appeals to Americans because of its suggestion of violence, began only with the Second World War, when, on the homefront, popcorn started to supplant candies and sweets,

which were being diverted to the troops overseas. It was the American agriculturalist Orville Redenbacher who developed a hybrid popping corn in the 1960s.

The question of hybridization is interesting of course. Ms Fussell reminds us that "technological man," who is both the father and the offspring of western liberalism, is guided in all endeavours, whether political, economic, or social, by the urge to reinvent the world according to his own design. In post-industrial society, this has meant manipulating nature instead of manipulating mechanics. Corn, being so genetically sensitive yet hardy enough to grow in a greater variety of soils than any other crop, is the perfect tool of such reinvention.

Ms Fussell, I was surprised to discover, stops short of discussing the pioneer geneticist Dr. Barbara McClintock, who died just recently at 90 years of age. Dr. McClintock is the person who discovered, in the words of the *New York Times*, that "fragments of genetic material move among chromosomes, regulating the way genes control cells' growth and development" and that "chromosomes break and recombine to create genetic changes in a process known as crossing over, a discovery that explained a puzzling pattern of inheritance." Dr. McClintock learned all this from studying corn, which was her research medium for more than 50 years. *The Story of Corn*, it seems to me, could also have made more of William Cobbett, the great 19th-century English radical, and his attempt to import baby-corn to Britain as a crop to feed the masses dispossessed by the Industrial Revolution—only to see it taken up as an exotic delicacy by the rich.

But I quibble. Fussell's book does

a fine job of making cross-disciplinary connections and has many bright threads within the broad weave of its argument. One of the best stories is about how the Kellogg brothers of Battle Creek, Michigan hit on an ancient Hopi dish called *piki* and marketed it as corn flakes. There are even moonshine recipes buried in this highly readable book.

ANOTHER WORK OF SOCIAL HISTORY with all the same virtues and the same appeal is *Lilies of the Hearth: The Historical Relationship between Women and Plants* (Camden House, \$14.95 paper). The author, Jennifer Bennett, formerly the gardening editor of *Harrowsmith*, spent six years doing the necessary research and writing (and, most conspicuously, the necessary thinking); the result has that special compelling ease of books that are labours of love. Her method is to start out in territory familiar to anyone interested in folklore and religion: the rise and fall of the idea of the mother goddess—of woman as the giver of life in the plant world as well as in humanity. From there she proceeds to more and more intrinsically interesting topics, such as the relationship between women as herb gardeners and their persecution for witchcraft, or floral symbolism in the rise of the very idea of romantic femininity. Some discussions sound more familiar than others: Catharine Parr Traill's horticultural advice in early 19th-century Upper Canada, for example, or the place of aristocratic women such as Vita Sackville-West in the history of gardening. Others seem newer: for instance, the virtual lock that women had, at the mass level, on the study of botany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The author also has some fresh things to say on floral subjects in the work of women painters, and she must have had a good time choosing the archival illustrations scattered throughout. In short, there is much interesting stuff here, which

the author has artfully dug out and skilfully reinterpreted.

SOME OTHER BOOKS OF INTEREST TO *Rotunda* readers:

- *The Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia of Invention and Technology* (Oxford University Press, \$68.95) isn't specifically designed for children and adolescents, but the writing is clear and the illustrations so well thought out that this is a perfect book for a young person with a scientific or mechanical bent. "Invention" here isn't used in the old Thomas Edison sense of commercial mechanization, nor in the modern sense of technology-transfer. Maybe "Science and Technology" would have been a better phrase to use in the title. In any case, this is the ideal book for finally coming to grips, in an intelligent, remedial sort of way, with many of those concepts that I for one am not above admitting that I've never understood—such as how computer languages work, how machine tools function, or how a jet engine operates.

- *Islands of Hope: Ontario's Parks and Wilderness* (Firefly Books, \$35), edited by Lori Labatt and Bruce Littlejohn, appears in good time for the centenary of Ontario's provincial parks system this year—and with enough subvention from both the provincial government and Ontario business to keep the price low. This is a large and colourful book on the provincial parks, marrying work by a number of photographers (some well known: John De Visser and Freeman Patterson) with work by a much wider range of writers (for example, Margaret Atwood but also a variety of specialists). The most interesting parts of the text are those that explain the policy and administration initiatives that led—virtually overnight—to the establishment of the parks system. In 1893, there was only one Ontario provincial park—Algonquin. As late as 1954 there were only eight, three others in the north (Sleeping Giant, Quetico, and Lake Superior) and four in the south (Presqu'île, Long Point, Ron-

deau, and Ipperwash). Now there are 261. Mind you, some were simply transferred to the province by the federal government. But most of the difference can be traced to a movement that began in the 1960s when "people trained in the social and natural sciences, as well as environmental and recreational planning, began to demand action."

- The danger of books about the Victorian home is that they will become as cluttered and forbidding as their subject. Kenneth L. Ames neatly avoids the problem in *Death in the Dining Room & Other Tales of Victorian Culture* (Temple University Press, US \$34.95) by concentrating on a few staples of furnishing that transcended class differences such as chairs and sofas. He has a wonderful time wringing the semiotic significance out of such furniture and bric-a-brac, and enjoys himself quite as much again in digressions about such matters as the engraved calling-card and the elaborate layers of ritual once associated with it.

- Mark Hume's fine book *The Run of the River* (New Star Books, \$14.95 paper) "is about the abuse of one of British Columbia's most valuable resources—its rivers." It's also travel writing done to an exacting standard, in fact the sort of para-literary travel writing that one usually expects to find only about urban people and distant parts, not about wilderness and one's own back yard. Hume, who writes for the Vancouver *Sun*, journeys on 11 British Columbia rivers. He writes descriptively, keeping his environmental argument calm and cogent. Comparisons to Robert J. Hing's book *Tracking Mackenzie to the Sea* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$24.95 paper) are inevitable and the comparisons inevitably favour Hume. Hing, an American pilot and adventurer, recreates Alexander Mackenzie's trip from Montreal to Bella Coola in 1792-93—by small plane.

DOUGLAS FETHERLING
Douglas Fetherling is book columnist for Rotunda



All's Wales that Ends Well

I am little short of astonished that a publication as esteemed and authoritative as yours could contain such an error. In the latest issue (Volume 25, number 3, November 1992) Shirley Ann Brown states in her article "A Regal Landmark in Stained Glass" that "the future George V had come from England...." George V ascended the throne in 1910 and celebrated his twenty-fifth (silver) anniversary in 1935. In 1919 the future Edward VIII was the Prince of Wales and, presumably, it was he who attended the unveiling. I hope this error will be corrected in the next issue of *Rotunda*.

PHILIP DODD,
TORONTO

I am sure that you find readers quite quick to pounce upon any discrepancies which they discover. Referring to Shirley Ann Brown's story about the stained glass window, I point out that Edward was the Prince of Wales in 1919 and George V was the King. Miss Brown does not score 100 per cent either on

poets. Tennyson wrote both *Morte d'Arthur* and *Idylls of the King*.

ERNA E. KREMER,
TORONTO

The Editor Responds

I received many letters and phone calls about the reference to the Prince of Wales in Shirley Ann Brown's article. In fact, in the almost eight years that I have edited Rotunda, I don't think that I've had a greater opportunity to speak directly to our readers. You are all correct on this point. It was the future Edward VIII and not George V who came to Ottawa to unveil the window.

Ms Brown was not mistaken, however, in her reference to Malory. Malory wrote Le Morte d'Arthur in 1469. Nobody who wrote caught one other error: Edmund is an English, not a French saint.

By the way, it was wonderful to hear from all of you. Your personal comments are most informative, helpful, and appreciated. You can write to Rotunda Magazine, c/o Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2C6, or send off a fax to (416) 586-5827, or call (416) 586-5590.

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